

**CHAPTER FIVE  
HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Historic resources include structures and sites, rural resources, community landmarks, archaeological and cultural sites, and the historic environment in which they exist. They serve as visual reminders of Lumpkin County's past, providing a link to its cultural heritage and a better understanding of the people and events which shaped the patterns of its development. Preservation of these resources makes it possible for them to continue to play an integral, vital role in the county and its communities. Because historic resources are irreplaceable, they should be protected from deterioration and the intrusion of incompatible land uses. Preservation can also provide the people of Lumpkin County with substantial savings in cost of infrastructure through the reuse of facilities and utilities and is often less expensive than demolition and new construction. The preservation and the reuse of historic structures can also attract tourism and promotes a quality of life that industry, new businesses, and residents find attractive in communities.

***Historical Narrative***

The area which is now Lumpkin County was part of the Cherokee Nation. It is not known for certain how long the Cherokee inhabited the lands, but evidence suggests they may possibly have been in North Georgia for thousands of years. According to the 1825 Census records, the Cherokee Nation had a population of a little over 13,000. Observers during this period described several villages with flourishing commercial activity. Operations owned and run by the Cherokee included sawmills, gristmills, blacksmith shops, cotton gins, public schools and a newspaper. Also included in the 1825 census were 1,277 black slaves owned by the Cherokee.

White settlement in the area which is now Lumpkin County was sparse before the 1820s, but a few settlers arrived as early as 1810. The discovery of gold around 1828 led to the country's first major gold rush. This event also prompted the intrusion onto, and the taking of, the Cherokee lands. In 1830, Georgia claimed ownership of the Cherokee lands and called it Cherokee County. In 1832, the State further divided this area into 10 counties.

Lumpkin County named for Governor Wilson Lumpkin, was created by Legislative Act on December 3, 1832 from parts of Cherokee, Habersham and Hall Counties. Around this time, the county was

divided into 40 acre gold lots and 160 acre farm lots and distributed by lottery. With the increase of "intruders" hungry for gold and land, the rights of the Indians were gradually stripped away. This culminated in the removal of the Cherokee to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River by 1838 in the infamous "Trail of Tears". However, some Cherokee remained in North Carolina. Today, the heritage of the Cherokee may be seen in place names such as Etowah, Chestatee, Dahlonega, Yahoola and Wahsega.

Auraria, one of the first settlements in Lumpkin County, developed in response to the gold rush. The fast growing town was strategically located between the Chestatee and Etowah Rivers where mining was occurring. The town was originally called Nuckelsville after Nathaniel Nuckells, who built a hotel there in 1832. The name was changed to Auraria in 1833.

It is believed that early in its existence, Auraria may have had several thousand residents, which decreased significantly by the 1850s. At its peak, the town of Auraria had 18-20 stores, 4-5 taverns and 15 law offices. The Old Graham Hotel, c. 1833, is currently the only structure surviving from this early period. However, it is in a dilapidated state and may already be considered lost.

Dahlonega, located five miles north of Auraria, was established as the permanent county seat in 1833. In 1836, the original log courthouse was replaced with a permanent brick courthouse, presently the oldest public building in North Georgia.

As the importance and amount of gold mining in North Georgia increased, the U.S. government established a U.S. Branch Mint at Dahlonega for the minting of gold coins. The mint was closed in June, 1861 due to the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1871, ownership of the building was transferred to the State of Georgia for the establishment of North Georgia Agricultural College, now North Georgia College. The Branch Mint building was destroyed by fire in 1878 and on its foundation was constructed Price Memorial Hall.

The peak of gold mining in Lumpkin County was from 1829 to 1840. Toward the late 1840s the easy gold began to "pan out." This caused many miners to move on to newer prospects in the gold fields of California and Colorado. However, gold mining did not disappear out of Lumpkin County altogether. New efforts at gold mining started again in the mid 1850s and again in the early 1900s as mining technologies developed.

As in many counties of North Georgia, agriculture played an important part in the economy of Lumpkin County. Farms were small and self-sufficient due to the rugged terrain of the county. Thus, the plantation system with its reliance upon slave labor and cotton was never widely established, however, cotton was grown in the county well into the 1900's. Common agricultural activities included row crop production, timbering, raising livestock, and, in the 1940s and 1950s, poultry production.

While resorts existed in Lumpkin County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Porter Springs, tourism has become a large part of the present day economy. In the mid 1960s, the old courthouse was acquired by the State and was restored for use as a gold museum. Also, land acquisition by the federal government has provided thousands of acres of wildlife and natural preserves, as well as recreational areas. Finally, the City of Dahlonega, with its historic square and association with the gold mining past, attracts many tourists.

### ***Historic Properties***

Lumpkin County's historic properties have been categorized according to property type to help identify them more clearly. These categories include: residential resources, commercial resources, institutional resources, rural resources, and historic, archaeological and cultural resources.

It is important to emphasize that the exclusion of some historic resources from the following sections does not necessarily indicate that they are not significant or worthy of preservation.

### ***Residential Resources***

The greatest majority of historic building stock in Lumpkin County are residential structures. The historic residential buildings are primarily of simple common (vernacular) designs, with the majority dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s. There are a few antebellum houses (pre-1860) remaining, however, most of these have been altered, abandoned, or are suffering from demolition by neglect.

Some vernacular historic structures in Lumpkin County exhibit restrained stylistic elements, but the majority do not have a great deal of ornamentation. Those houses that do possess stylistic elements exhibit primarily Greek Revival (entranceways, massing), Victorian-era (porch posts, trim), or Craftsman (brackets, porch posts) stylistic features. The infrequency of high style structures may be attributed to the rural agricultural nature of Lumpkin County.

Styles and types of residential structures in Lumpkin County remain fairly consistent with its rural heritage, exhibiting local craftsmanship and the utilization of local materials. Almost all of the historic residential structures are wood frame houses and most have stone chimneys. Some structures have brick chimneys or a combination of stone and brick.

Log construction still exists in Lumpkin County, however, many of these structures have been abandoned, moved, or converted for use as barns or other outbuildings. An example of log house construction may be seen at the Poore Homeplace site. Located on Highway 60, the Poore log house is reputed to have been built prior to 1835. It is one and a half stories, side gable, with a rear ell addition. A similar log structure is the Stephens log house located on Emory Stephens Road. A rather unique example may be seen off Cavender Creek Road. This log structure has a pyramidal roof, interior stone chimney, and saddle notched logs.

The most commonly represented house types in Lumpkin County are the hall and parlor, plantation plain, central hall, saddlebag, and bungalow. Hall and parlor, central hall and saddlebag types all tend to be two rooms wide with differences being in the floor plan. The hall and parlor is usually one room deep and consists of two rooms unequal in size with the entrance leading into the larger of the two rooms. The central hall consists of two rooms separated by a hallway. It is one room deep and frequently has one or two exterior chimneys. The saddlebag is easily recognizable with two rooms separated by a chimney. Normally, it has a side gabled roof, is one room deep, and has either one or two entrances. All three of these types can be found intact, or with various additions either to the front, rear, or side of the structure. A common vernacular historic residence found in Lumpkin County is a one and a half to two story frame hall and parlor type with a small gable in the center front. These gables often have fishscale, diamond, or sawtooth pattern shingles. Window sashes are generally four panes over four panes. The roof may be either a side gable or hipped roof and porches are almost always present. One or two exterior chimneys may be made from stone and/or brick.

The plantation plain was also found in Lumpkin County. This house type is characterized by a tall, narrow, two-story profile and exterior chimneys. They tend to have varying stylistic elements, such as Greek Revival entrance ways and moldings, or Victorian-era turned woodwork and trim. Variations of the

plantation plain type in Lumpkin County include one and a half story forms with shed or half-hipped full-width porches, and rear ell or shed room extensions. An excellent example is the Davis-Reagan House on Highway 9 west of Dahlonega. This house has a Greek Revival entrance characterized by a transom and sidelights, as well as dentil moldings and chamfered trim on door and window surrounds. Another example is the London Farmhouse on Long Branch Road with its two-story full facade porch and rear ell addition.

The bungalow house type was also found in Lumpkin County. It is characterized by their overall rectangular shapes and irregular floor plans. Houses of this type are generally low and have varied roof forms and integral shed, or half-hipped porches.

Lumpkin County's historic residential structures range in condition from deteriorated to good. High concentrations of intact residential structures are located in the southeastern, as well as the northern part of Lumpkin County. The historic residential structures in Lumpkin County are significant for representing the various stages of settlement and development in the County. Although exact dates of construction for most structures are unknown, many were found to have been built in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

#### ***Commercial Properties***

Few historic commercial structures remain standing in rural Lumpkin County. Most commercial buildings that remain are in poor condition and in danger of being lost to neglect in the next few years. Those remaining that are still recognizable as commercial structures take various forms. One of the best examples of an intact store in Lumpkin County is the Woody Store in Auraria. This two-story wood frame structure has a gable front and is typical of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings that were once found in the County. One-story commercial buildings were also found.

#### ***Institutional Resources***

Institutional resources in Lumpkin County include structures such as schools, churches, and government buildings. Several historic schools still exist, although many have been abandoned and are suffering from demolition by neglect. Two excellent examples remaining include the Lydia School on Porter Springs Road and the old Pisgah School near Turner's Corner. Both buildings exemplify the one-room school type that was once so prevalent in Lumpkin County before the schools were consolidated in 1958.

The local church in Lumpkin County was very important to communities not only as spiritual centers, but also as meeting places for the district. Most of these churches were of basic clapboard construction with rectangular plans. The church would sometimes have a steeple or, in the case of Mt. Zion Church on Highway 115, two towers on either side of the front of the building. Overall, the design remained fairly simple. Many later churches were constructed of brick, or older churches are covered by brick veneer. A good example of a brick church is Mt. Pisgah near Turner's Corner constructed in the 1920s. Some churches, though founded long ago, have torn down their original church buildings, or have remodeled them to the point of being unrecognizable.

***Rural Resources***

Rural resources can include numerous aspects of a community. These resources include, but are not limited to, barns and outbuildings associated with agricultural activity, open space such as pastures and fields, abandoned rail beds, bridges, and scenic byways. Lumpkin County's history, for the most part, is centered around its history as one of the sites of the nation's first gold rush and its rural heritage. Its landscape reflects this heritage and should be preserved as much as possible.

One of the legacies of the gold mining era in Lumpkin County is the impact it left upon the landscape. Mining practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries caused varying degrees of erosion. The result of this can still be seen in some parts of the county. An example of this is the Barlow Cut located on Cane Creek off Auraria Road. Another area that exhibits the result of mining practices is located along the historic copper mining area along the Chestatee River in the eastern part of the county.

Lumpkin County has a strong rural heritage which is apparent in the many barns and outbuildings remaining throughout the county. These farm buildings can be found either clustered together or alone in the field of an abandoned farm. Unfortunately, some of these buildings are no longer in use and suffer from demolition by neglect. However, there are many farmsteads which still use and maintain these structures. An example of this rural landscape can be seen at the London Farm at the intersection of GA 400 and Highway 60. Situated near the Chestatee River on Long Branch Creek, the London Farm retains some of its historic setting. Its many outbuildings appear to be largely intact and well-maintained. The Davis-Reagan house and farm also possesses many outbuildings of varying types and styles.

Other rural resources include the remains of old grist mills, such as the one located at the Abercrombie-Barnes Farm in the southeastern part of the county. Old bridges, such as the one located off Highway 60 on the Chestatee River offer evidence of past transportation routes. There are many areas in Lumpkin County exhibiting extraordinary scenic views, as well as picturesque countryside, agricultural landscapes, and river and mountain corridors. These resources contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by residents and tourists and should be protected against uncontrolled growth and development.

***Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Sites***

A variety of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources exist in Lumpkin County. Among them are the many gold, copper and mica mines left over from the mining days. These sites offer both historic and archaeological information on mining practices of the 19th and 20th centuries. Other historic resources include: "The Station," located off Auraria Road, which was the site of a U.S. fort in 1838 and served as General Winfield Scott's headquarters; Wahoo Church Cemetery, located on SR 52, contains graves dating to the early period of the county's existence with unique house tombs and discs atop the headstones; Antioch Cemetery in Auraria also contains graves dating to the early 1830s; the tunnel near Blackburn Park which was blasted through the mountain to shift the course of the Etowah River; and Trahlyta's Grave at Stonepile Gap. These sites, as well as others not mentioned, have potential in the areas of heritage tourism and education programs.

A formal county-wide survey of Lumpkin County's archaeological resources has not been undertaken. Knowledge of such resources consists of information gathered by a variety of means. They range from surveys and investigations of varying scale such as those conducted on U.S. Forest Service lands, to reported sightings by individual collectors and professionals. These archaeological sites, most specifically the prehistoric, are susceptible to damage caused by development or collection by non-professionals who do not properly record the site information and locations.

Archaeological sites need not be prehistoric to be significant. There are a few sites in Lumpkin County that relate to events ranging from the early settlement period to the early twentieth century. For instance, remnants of the Town of Auraria may supply valuable information on the town's development and its role in the early gold rush.

Since Lumpkin County was part of the last remaining Indian land in Georgia, the archaeological potential in this area is very promising and should be further investigated.

The Chestatee and Etowah Rivers exhibit a high potential for containing both prehistoric and historic archaeological resources. They are archaeologically and historically sensitive areas and may be irrevocably damaged by insensitive development and despoliation. Archaeological resources that may be present in and along other water resources are similarly sensitive to damage and should be protected and guarded against any further damage.

Potential archaeological sites need to be protected as important parts of the county's historic or prehistoric cultural resources. Appropriate management should incorporate an archaeological survey of the properties as an initial stage of resource planning. Such an inventory would provide a basis on which to plan development and evaluate research potential for addressing questions about the past.

***Impacts on Historic Resources in Lumpkin County***

Some negative impacts on Lumpkin County's historic resources exist. Development of land on or near cultural or historic sites poses a potential threat to Lumpkin county's most important resources. Resources along GA 400 and other major transportation corridors appear to be the most vulnerable to development or incompatible land uses. A current example is the development taking place at GA 400 and GA 60 and its proximity to and effects on the London Farm. If such development along this corridor continues, some consideration should be given to the adaptive use, or sensitive treatment of historic structures. Careful planning of the county's growth and development should include the recognition and protection of historic resources, as well as promotion of compatible development.

Demolition by neglect is one of the major negative impacts on historic resources in Lumpkin County. Demolition by neglect occurs when property is abandoned and then deteriorates or when a property owner allows a structure to go unmaintained until the structure becomes derelict beyond repair. Many historic resources in Lumpkin County will be lost if not restored within the next few years. The permanent loss of historic and cultural resources would be detrimental to the county. Only by informing the residents of the county of the economic and cultural benefits historic resources provide will the problem of demolition by



neglect decrease. These benefits include an increase in heritage tourism, economic development, and an understanding of the county's rural past.

Inappropriate alterations have also impacted some of Lumpkin County's historic resources. It is important to take into consideration the historic character of a structure when undertaking rehabilitation projects. Guidance from the Regional Preservation Planner, the State Office of Historic Preservation, or a private consultant should be considered.

***Strategies for Historic Preservation***

The following are elements of a potential preservation plan for Lumpkin County. They are suggested steps to follow to implement preservation in Lumpkin County, but are by no means a complete plan in themselves. Much more extensive research and time would be necessary to produce such a plan. Ideally, the community can pursue all of the following objectives, but it is wise to take one at a time to achieve long-lasting and community supported preservation.

***Survey***

The most recent survey of Lumpkin County's historic resources was undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources in 1976 (see Map 7-1). This survey, while good, is not comprehensive. Many important historic resources were not included in the survey, and some of the 62 historic resources that were surveyed have been demolished, either outright or by neglect or destroyed by fire. However, an updated survey would most likely reveal more historic resources and more detailed information about the properties.

Surveys can be used to identify individual buildings and districts for possible listing in the National Register or Georgia Register of Historic Places; support local governmental agencies; aid preservation and land-use planning; and promote research of the states history and architecture. Also, through the public's participation, encouraged by the Office of Historic Preservation surveys can increase awareness of, and interest in, a community's historic buildings.

***Analysis and Recognition of Historic Resources***

Once a community or county knows what its historic resources are, then it can begin to recognize these resources and bring community attention to their significance. One tool a community can use to achieve this is the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the

nation's list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. Although listing on the National Register does not protect properties from alteration or demolition, it serves as a good way to bring recognition of and pride in a community's historic properties. National Register landmarks and districts also serve to pinpoint areas in a community where preservation and local protection can be implemented. Some potential National Register nominations include multiple property nominations in the Old Leathers Ford Road/Mt. Olive Church area, along Porter Springs Road and the Turner's Corner area, and a district nomination of Auraria and possibly Camp Wahsega. Opportunities for individual nominations throughout the county also exist. The Preservation Planner at the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center or the State Historic Preservation Office in the Department of Natural Resources should be contacted to assist in the determination of eligibility of the resource(s) and in the preparation of National Register nominations.

Once all of the county's resources have been determined, the community needs to decide which of these resources are most important to preserve, usually those deemed worthy of National Register recognition, and they should be informed of the benefits of preservation including:

- ! Historic resources are top tourist destinations. Revitalized buildings and historic districts attract new business and tourists, stimulating retail sales and increasing sales tax revenue.
- ! Historic rehabilitation creates new jobs during construction and later in new offices, shops and restaurants.
- ! Increased attractiveness for increased investment.
- ! Tax incentives are available for rehabilitation.
- ! Less energy is required to rehabilitate old buildings than to demolish and replace them with new construction.

Goals and priorities should be set for the preservation of these resources. Such goals might include preserving specific rural areas of the county and making the community aware of their importance, protecting the most important historic resources in the county from demolition or demolition-by-neglect, or implementing a heritage education program based on the county's archaeological and architectural resources.

The final step in developing a plan for preservation in Lumpkin County is to implement the tools and actions needed to achieve the community's goals. These tools or actions may include survey, National Register designations, a city/county preservation ordinance, financial incentives and community development programs. Information about these programs may be obtained from the Georgia Mountains Regional Preservation Planner or the State Office of Historic Preservation in the Department of Natural Resources.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Cain, Andrew W., 1932. A History of Lumpkin County: 1832-1932.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources. "Survey of Lumpkin County's Historic Resources." Elizabeth A. Lyon and Jenny Thurston, 1976.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Office of Historic Preservation, Vision for the Future, Atlanta, 1991.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, 1984. A Field Guide to American Houses.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1955. "Lumpkin County Farm Statistics: 1900-1955."